



Branford, Connecticut

Economic Development Commission

Annual Report

JULY 1, 2004 – JUNE 30, 2005

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) met throughout the year on the third Wednesday of each month (except August), with continued high attendance and participation. FY 2004-05 commission members include: *Neal Crowley, Bob Dow, Ray Figlewski, Julie Francis, Joe Gordon, Rhoda Loeb, Al Mignone (chair), Bill O'Brien, and Doss Venema*. Chamber of Commerce president *John Cushing* attended regularly and actively participated in the Commission's discussions.

Neal Crowley continued to act as the EDC's liaison to the Planning and Zoning Commission, reporting to the EDC each month on new applications as well as on recent decisions. We are very grateful to Neal for keeping us abreast of P&Z's activity.

As in previous years, **various guests attended EDC monthly meetings and provided the Commission with timely information and valuable insight** into many projects and programs relevant to the town's economic well-being.

- **Regional Workforce Alliance Manager Chris Reardon** provided the Commission with information on its mission, including its project to help the displaced workers from Dana. She highlighted the Alliance's priorities, including a youth-at-work program and the development of a manufacturing job bank.
- **Regional Growth Partnership's Project Manager Roger Harrison** provided the Commission with an overview of the organization's work and its current efforts on the business survey and visitation project.
- **The Town's state legislators: Senator Ed Meyer, Rep. Peter Panaroni and Rep. Patricia Widlitz** met with the EDC shortly before the legislative session opened to discuss various topics of interest to our local business community. Major issues identified included: transportation & traffic, tax structure, workforce transportation, ECS, healthcare costs, and ethics reform.

The newly formed **Town Center Merchants Committee**, working at the direction of EDC member Julie Francis, took on a variety of projects:

- **Worked with our Police Department to improve traffic safety on Main St.;**
- **submitted recommendations concerning the Green to the Center Review Board;**
- **formed a partnership with Recreation Dept. with the ice rink on the Green,**
- **produced and distributed Branford's first Town Center Retail Map;**
- **in partnership with the Branford Festival committee, hosted "Mind-Body-Spirit".**

The EDC also embarked on its first strategic planning effort. By spring, we had developed and approved a mission statement, outlined the contents of a data base, and began to develop a set of measurable goals and objectives.

The EDC reviewed and acted on seven applications for demolition permits. These properties were: 2-4 Chestnut St, 4 Bayberry Lane, 52 Beckett, 13 Fourth Ave., 7 River Road, 14 Fifth Ave., and 105 Seaview Ave. The EDC noted that number of demolitions was less than in the previous year when it brought its concern about the increasing number to the First Selectman's attention. A review of the process was initiated last year and new ordinance approved by the RTM in June.

The 2005 annual "State of the Town Breakfast" keynote speaker was David LeVasseur, Undersecretary for Intergovernmental Policy State at the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. Mr. LeVasseur, also a former first selectman, spoke to an audience of 150 local businesses on the importance of plans of conservation and development to both towns and the state. First Selectman John Opie shared his views on the Town's fiscal condition, highlighting major developments over the past year including property assessment, re-designing the Exit 53 Connector, and open space acquisition. The program, conducted in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, also included an overview of current and anticipated business development throughout town, from the new train station on Maple Street, to new medical facilities under construction. The EDC continued its other work with the Chamber through its involvement with the Government Relations and the Business Development Committees.

Through the staff assistance of Special Projects Manager Terence Elton, the EDC also:

- participated in the Town's effort to secure state approval to reconfigure Exit 53;
- worked on the new commuter train station project on Maple Street,
- assisted the Shoreline YMCA in its efforts to establish Branford as its new home,
- aided Cintas Uniforms in securing town and state permits in order to expand, and
- helped "Spot-On" receive permission to establish wireless internet service on the Green and across the Town Center along Main Street.

The Commission also continued to periodically publish articles in the New England Real Estate Journal promoting the town as a place for businesses to locate and highlighting our quality of life. Special Projects Manager Terence Elton authored the articles and worked with the paper on the timing and placement.

Finally, after serving on the Commission for nine years, I have resigned from the EDC because I am relocating out of Branford. It has been a genuine pleasure to work with so many fine, dedicated citizens and to have the opportunity to contribute to the Town's efforts to be a "Sound location." I wish the Commission and everyone involved with the Town the very best in every endeavor.

Respectfully submitted,



Albert E. Mignone, Chairman